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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

August 2011

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, August 18, 2011, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be Hal Leftwich, Administrator of the Hancock Medical Center. *Reservations are required* and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call *by noon on Wednesday, August 17*, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.

## ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

With October just a couple of months away, it's time to begin final plans for the Hancock County Historical Society Eighteenth Annual Cemetery Tour. It will be held on Halloween night, Monday, **October 31, 2011**, at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Second Street. We will need volunteers to help prepare the cemetery for the tour (mark the path, etc.), to portray citizens buried there, to act as guides, and to serve at the Lobrano House. We also seek donations of cookies, candy, cupcakes, etc. To volunteer, please call the Society at 467-4090.



The Gilmore Hotel  
on the corner of Railroad Ave. (Blaize) and Keller St.  
Bay St. Louis, MS

## The Gilmore Hotel

By  
Eddie Coleman

The Gilmore Hotel stood at the corner of Keller Street and Railroad Avenue (currently Blaize Ave.) from the 1890's until the mid-1940's. Located across the street from the train depot, it offered lodgings as well as spirits and tobacco to boarders. The proprietor was James Gilmore Fayard, Sr. Information about the hotel and its

history comes from family history, a couple of brief newspaper entries, and the Sanborn maps of 1893—1944.

Family oral history from a granddaughter of Mr. Fayard provides some information about the business. She reports that her grandfather owned the hotel circa 1900, that it was located near the railroad tracks, and that it supposedly burned down. She says that her father, James Gilmore Fayard, Jr., was born in 1904 and spent summers in Bay St. Louis until at least 1919, traveling by train from



THE

# HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor  
Pat Fuchs, Publisher

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## LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY — FRIDAY  
10:00AM — 3:00PM  
Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)

## MISSION STATEMENT

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

New Orleans. His father lived and worked in Bay St. Louis, and his mother, siblings, and he lived in New Orleans for the children to attend school and for his mother to have medical care.

The granddaughter is unsure whether the hotel burned while her grandfather owned it or not because there is another version of the family story. This rendering says that Mr. Fayard went bankrupt and lost the hotel when alcohol running ships could no longer transport liquor to it. This legend suggests that he had the hotel during Prohibition in the 1920's and that he lost it during that time.

In addition, information about Mr. Fayard and the hotel comes from two *Sea Coast Echo* articles, one dated May 20, 1893, and one dated October 7, 1893. The earlier entry reported that Mr. Fayard was the proprietor of the Railroad Exchange and kept "a quiet and orderly place," which he had had for four years. He sold various kinds of alcohol and tobacco products. Mr. Fayard was described as a "genial good fellow" who enforced the "rules of the house." This date gives evidence that he had been in business since 1889.

The later article in the *Echo* reported that Mr. Gilmore Fayard, the "live and wide-awake proprietor of the Railroad Exchange, had plans drawn for a magnificent saloon and hotel building to be erected in the rear of the railroad depot." However, the Gilmore Hotel was located *across* the street from the depot. Is this the area described as "in the rear of the railroad depot"?

Further information comes from the Sanborn maps of Bay St. Louis. A building appears at the corner of Keller Street and Railroad Avenue from 1893 until 1944 as evidenced by the Sanborn maps of these years. In 1893 and 1898 a rectangular building, labeled "saloon" appears on the map. However, its footprint is different from the structure which appears in 1904, noted as the Gilmore Hotel. The 1909 map labels the same property as the Bancard Hotel. Subsequently, this property is identified as "saloon, rooms, and barber" in 1917, given no notation in 1924 [Perhaps, it was closed at this time?], labeled a hotel in 1930, and cited as "vacant" in 1944.

Since the footprint of the hotel remained the same from 1904—1944, one wonders if the

## SANBORN MAP COMPANY

The Sanborn Map Company, founded in the mid-1860's, is a highly regarded cartographer of several thousand U. S. cities. Originally developed for fire insurance purposes, the maps were updated periodically until 1970 and provide extremely accurate information about buildings, including commercial, residential, and outbuildings, in a particular city or town. In addition to giving footprints of current structures, the maps also list materials used in construction of these building.

The maps have proven quite useful for preservation and restoration as well as genealogical and other research efforts.





The gentleman at the right with his hand on his hip has been identified as Gilmore Fayard, proprietor of the hotel.

saloon of the earlier maps is the Railroad Exchange. One also wonders if Mr. Fayard owned the hotel when it was named the Bancard. According to the granddaughter, he did because her father spent summers in Bay St. Louis until 1919. The question about when the hotel burned can be answered in a general way. The fire must have occurred sometime between the 1944 map and a subsequent update in 1963, for the latter map shows the corner of Kellar and Railroad Ave. as vacant.

An interesting aside about James Gilmore Fayard comes from long-time resident Edward "Buster" Heitzman. He remembers that Mr. Fayard gave wallets in the shape of beer kegs as souvenirs. Unfortunately, Mr. Heitzman lost his keepsake in Hurricane Katrina.

*[Editor's note: If you have further information concerning the Gilmore Hotel, please get in touch with the Historical Society either by mail, e mail, or phone.]*

#### SOURCES:

"Fayard, Gilmore." Vertical file. Hancock County Historical Society.

Sanborn Maps. *Bay St. Louis, MS.* New York: Sanborn Map Co., Ltd., 1893—1963.

Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain.* Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.

**VOLUNTEER TO HELP  
WITH THE  
18TH ANNUAL  
CEMETERY TOUR**



## Did You Know This about Hancock County?

By  
Scott Bagley

Did you know that the first county seat of Hancock County was an early Native-American settlement called Center? Very soon after the area which was to become early Hancock County was made part of the Mississippi Territory in 1812, settlers, mostly along the Pearl River, were interested in seeing a local government established that would bring lawlessness under control, help to confirm their land titles, represent them in the territorial legislature, and take care of their interests in other ways as well. According to the legendary historian and writer, S. G. Thigpen, a mass meeting was held for the purpose of establishing such a government, likely in the fall of 1812.

This inaugural meeting was held in a building simply called the "Meeting House," made of logs, and serving also as a church and schoolhouse. This building was apparently located about nine miles northwest of Picayune, near where the line between townships four and five crossed the old Columbia-Gainesville Road. This first building eventually burned down, but it was rebuilt and thereafter known appropriately as the Burnt Meeting Place.

The settlers attending this meeting decided to send a delegation to the Mississippi Territorial legislature (Mississippi would not become a state until



1817) to request the formation of a new county within the territory. The proposed name of the new county was to be Hancock, in honor of the famous signer of the Declaration of Independence. The delegation also asked that the Native-American settlement of Center be named as the county seat. Center was proposed as it was near the geographic center of the area and was also the only community of any size in the prospective new county. (Center was located about five miles northeast of Picayune near what is today Caesar, Mississippi, in Pearl River County). Additionally, because the Choctaw chief had made his headquarters there, all trails in the area led to Center. There were no roads then, but some trails were wide enough for a wagon to pass.

This delegation was successful, and Hancock County was established on December 14, 1812. The act establishing the county defined its boundaries to be "All that tract of country lying south of the thirty-first degree of north latitude and west of the line

running due north from the middle of the Bay of Biloxi on the thirty-first degree of north latitude and east of the Pearl River." This territory encompassed the present limits of Hancock, Pearl River, Harrison, and Stone counties as well as the southern parts of Lamar, Forrest, and Perry counties. In addition the act officially established Center as the new county's seat.

As the boundaries of Hancock County changed following Mississippi statehood, the once centrally located settlement of Center became more and more remote to the more populated areas of the county. Conducting any legal business required a journey that was long and difficult. The early apparent attractiveness of Center had not lived up to its earlier promise. Although the Pearl River provided the most convenient and economical way to travel and ship goods, Center was several miles inland, and inconvenient overland travel was required to reach it. It was not, therefore, a

good location. Few whites ever permanently settled in Center, and it remained a predominantly Native-American settlement.

Eventually, in 1837, the county seat of Hancock County was moved to Gainesville. With this move, Center's remaining population declined quickly: even the Native-Americans left. Center became a ghost town and eventually all but disappeared.

Of course Bay St. Louis was to become (in 1867) the county seat of present-day Hancock County. What was the status of Bay St. Louis in 1812 when Center was chosen as the county seat? According to the history penned by J. F. H. Claiborne, Bay St. Louis in 1812 was a sleepy little village with no commerce...merely a small resort with a few houses along the beach.

#### SOURCE:

Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.

#### TREE REGISTRATION

Registration of magnolia and oak trees has resumed after its suspension because of Hurricane Katrina. The Bay/Waveland Garden Club has volunteered to "do the leg work," and the Historical Society will field the calls and pass the requests on to the Garden Club. If you have a tree or trees which you would like to register, please call the Historical Society at 228-467-4090.

#### NEW MEMBERS

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**For questions you may call Sara Sheldon, Chairman/Curator at 210-667-4634;  
Helen Clunie, Treasurer at 601-268-8822; Don Wicks, Secretary at 601-799-9360.  
Our e-mail address is [hildaarchive@bellsouth.net](mailto:hildaarchive@bellsouth.net) and our web address is  
<http://www.hildahoffmannarchive.org>**

**Don't forget to put August 13<sup>th</sup> on your calendar. We want to meet our fellow  
historians from Hancock County. We look forward to hearing from you.**



**The Hilda Hoffmann Memorial Archive and Museum  
301 Williams Avenue  
Picayune, Mississippi 39466**

**Hancock County, This Is Your History Too**

July 4, 2010, Hilda Formby Hoffmann of Picayune, an esteemed local historian passed away leaving her historical and genealogical library to Sara Sheldon of San Antonio, Texas, stipulating that it be permanently housed in Pearl River County if at all possible. She rushed to Picayune to remove this huge library from the home, as required. Other close friends, Helen and Bob Clunie of Hattiesburg met her in Picayune and together they moved to a storage shed belonging to Helen, nearby. Don Wicks became involved and he quickly applied for a non-profit organization for membership and donation support and to pave the way for potential grants in the future. Wicks, Charles Gray, and Dr. Marco Giardino together arranged to have the collection moved and stored at a safe facility in Hancock County. We now have a permanent home at 301 Williams Ave., Picayune thanks to Helen Clunie who purchased the small house with the intent of donating it to our corporation.

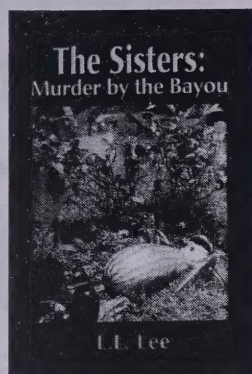
The Helen Alexander Clunie Memorial Library, Home of the Hilda Formby Hoffmann Memorial Archive and Museum is established. Our success depends whether south Mississippi communities will come together to support the project with memberships and donations. The collection contains the genealogies for well over 500 surnames of the area, hundreds of cemetery recordings (some lost long ago), valuable photos, documents and maps, along with resource materials. Our goal is to provide a first-class research facility and small museum, worthy of our heritage, and vital, that those who came before us will not be forgotten.

Mr. Charles Gray, Director and Founder of Hancock County Historical Society had this to say about the collection after he visited with us at the storage shed on August 27, 2010:

*"From what I have seen of Ms Hilda's vast collection, it is very important that it be made available to researchers who would otherwise never be able to locate most (if any) of the information she amassed. I hope that every document can be scanned and indexed for quick reference. This will take a little time, but it will be incredibly valuable to researchers. Because Pearl River County was originally part of Hancock, many, many of the families documented in this collection live (or at least did live) in both counties. Therefore you have my assurance I will do anything I can to help preserve this history".*

Please join us with your \$25.00 membership. We'll mail you a newsletter to keep you posted on our progress and invite you to our membership meetings. The next one is planned for August 13<sup>th</sup> at the Williams Avenue address at 2PM. Please make checks payable to: Hilda Hoffmann Memorial Archive, Inc., and mail to P. O. Box 162, Picayune, MS 39466. Be sure to designate on the check whether for membership or a donation. If you are willing to add a donation to the membership due, we ask that you send a separate check for that.





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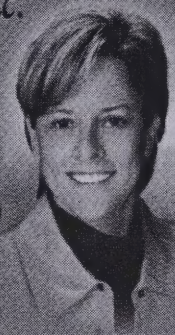
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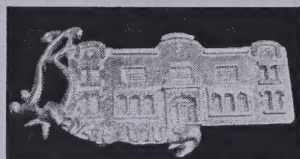
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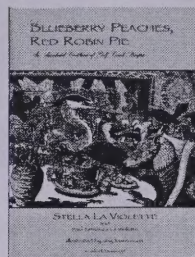
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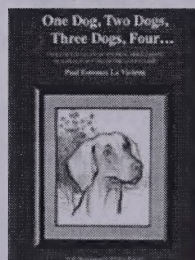


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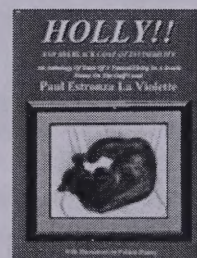
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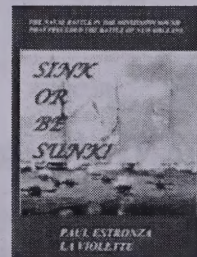
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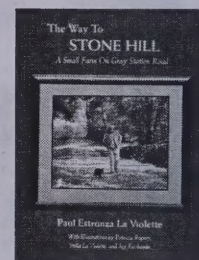
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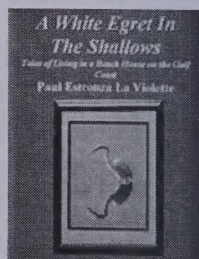
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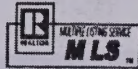
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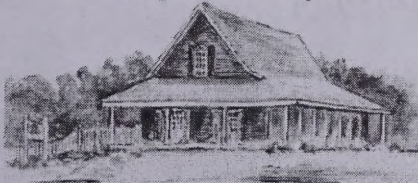
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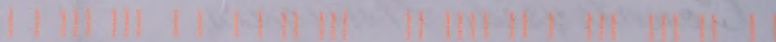
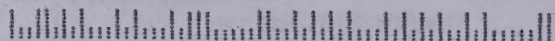
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